CALL FOR PAPERS
Journal of Strategic Information Systems

Special Issue: Information Systems Strategy as Practice: Micro Strategy and Strategizing for IS

The “rigor versus relevance” debate and the practical relevance of much contemporary research are recurring themes not just in the information systems discipline (Straub and Ang, 2011; Klein and Rowe, 2008; Roseman and Vessey, 2008) but in the wider field of management (c.f. Nicolai and Seidl, 2010; Moisander and Stenfors, 2009; Mohrman et al., 2001; Shrivastava, 1987). In the IS discipline in particular, this has led to some scholars questioning the practical value of much of the published research (cf. Desouza, 2006; Keen, 1991; Senn 1998; Benbasat and Zmud, 1999; Lyytinen, 1999). A central premise of the arguments presented by these protagonists is that much research draws on methods that are inappropriate to the applied nature of the discipline. The foundation of this argument reflects the social sciences ‘practice turn’ that sees all knowledge as existing within the fields of practice (Schatzki et al., 2001). In philosophy, the turn to pragmatism similarly values knowledge through practitioners’ eyes and places the practitioner at the centre of theory development (Putnam, 1995; Rorty, 1998). This movement toward practical relevance prefers concrete micro actions rather than an abstract or macro analysis. People and knowledge that makes a difference in practice are central to research endeavors.

In line with these arguments, the strategic management discipline has seen the emergence of a body of research that focuses on strategizing or the ‘doing of strategy’ (Jarzabkowski and Spee, 2009; Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Johnson et al., 2003, 2007; Whittington, 1996). Often referred to as the "Strategy as Practice" school, it emphasises the actual day-to-day activities, contexts, processes and content that relate to strategic outcomes. This momentum towards a more micro perspective is in response to growing frustrations with the contemporary strategy literature of its relevance to practitioners. Part of the problem is that there has been a dominant macro focus in strategic management research that is remote from practice, particularly the normative models resulting from it. Research in the Strategy as Practice genre emphasizes how people engage in the ‘real work’ of developing a strategy and strategizing. In addressing strategy as practice, the focus of research is on strategy praxis, strategy practitioners and strategy practices, i.e. the work, workers and tools of strategy (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; Whittington, 2002).

Drawing on this Strategy as Practice perspective, this Special Issue seeks to explore information systems strategy and strategizing from a practice perspective. Reflecting the arguments for research relevance, this call echoes Lee’s (2010) recent comment that “the starting point of IS research need not be the existing theory (primarily epistêmê) located in the IS discipline’s own (or any other) research literature; rather, the starting point could be the technê and phronêsis of IS professionals, managers, executives, and consultants (‘natives’) themselves…” (p. 346).

Submitted manuscripts may report on research that explores the patterns of how people interact and are involved in strategic activity related to IS (and possibly alignment or co-evolution with business strategies). Additionally, they may elicit and present the detailed processes and practices that constitute the day-to-day activities in developing an IS strategy and IS strategizing in practice. While theoretical contributions are welcome (cf. Zundel and Kokkalis, 2010), the focus of empirical data collection will normally be on the people engaged in the real work of IS strategizing (cf. Levina and Vaast 2006 for
strategic IS sourcing). Crucially, any reported research will examine IS strategy not as something a firm has but something its people do. A variety of research methods are also encouraged, including action research and design science, where the objective is to contribute to the knowing how, practical knowledge, and knowhow of IS strategy.

References


Straub, D., and Ang, S. “Editors’s Comments,” MIS Quarterly (35:1) 2011, pp III-XI.

Important Dates

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